

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

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TO: All Commissioners and Alternates

FROM: Lawrence J. Goldzband, Executive Director (415/352-3653; larry.goldzband@bcdc.ca.gov)
Andrea Gaffney, Bay Design Analyst (415/352-3643; andrea.gaffney@bcdc.ca.gov)

SUBJECT: Approved Minutes of the November 5, 2018, BCDC Design Review Board Meeting

1. **Call to Order and Safety Announcement.** Design Review Board (Board) Chair Karen Alschuler called the meeting to order at the Bay Area Metro Center, 375 Beale Street, Yerba Buena Room, First Floor, San Francisco, California, at approximately 5:30 p.m., and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Other Board members in attendance included Board Vice Chair Gary Strang and Board Members Cheryl Barton, Jacinta McCann, and Stefan Pellegrini. BCDC staff in attendance included Walt Deppe, Andrea Gaffney, and Ethan Lavine. The presenters were Sean Buran (CIM Group) and Sarah Kuehl (EinwillerKuehl, Inc.).

Andrea Gaffney, BCDC Bay Design Analyst, reviewed the safety protocols, meeting protocols, and meeting agenda.

2. **Report of Chief of Permits.** Ms. Gaffney provided the announcements as follows:

a. The next Board meeting will be held on December 17th. The Board will review the Encinal Terminals Project.

b. The November 15, 2018, Commission meeting agenda will include a briefing on the Ocean Protection Council's sea level rise guidance and how it is being applied in the BCDC regulatory program, and a workshop on staff reports, facilitated by a professor from the University of Kansas.

c. The December 6, 2018, Commission meeting agenda will include reviewing permit applications for a proposed park at Bay Point by East Bay Regional Parks and the Golden Gate Suicide Barrier project.

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d. The February and March Commission meeting agendas will include reviewing the Alameda Marina Mixed-Use Redevelopment, the Alameda Landing Waterfront Mixed-Use Development, the Alcatraz Island Embarkation at Piers 31, 31.5, and 33, and the Pier 22.5 Fireboat Station.

3. **Approval of Draft Minutes for October 15, 2018, Meeting.** Ms. Alschuler asked to revise her comment in the fourth paragraph on page 12 from “it is difficult to believe that the area in concept one goes through” to “it is difficult to believe that the area provided in concept one offers much of an east/west view.”

MOTION: Mr. Strang moved approval of the Minutes for the October 15, 2018, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission Design Review Board meeting as revised, seconded by Ms. McCann.

VOTE: The motion carried with a vote of 4-0-0 with Board Chair Alschuler, Board Vice Chair Strang, and Board Members Barton and McCann voting approval with no abstentions.

4. **Jack London Square, F3 Hotel Site; City of Oakland, Alameda County (Second Post-Permit Issuance Review).** The Board held their second post-permit issuance review of a proposal by the CIM Group to construct a new boutique hotel and adjacent public access areas at Jack London Square. The proposed project would include a six-story, 155-room boutique hotel. Public access improvements include an approximately 27,000 square-foot waterfront public access area referred to as the “Estuary Green,” a Bay Trail segment, and additional adjacent public access improvements.

a. **Staff Presentation.** Walt Deppe, BCDC Coastal Program Analyst, reviewed information from the 2004 pre-permit review, reviewed the project, and summarized the changes made to the design since incorporating the Board’s comments and recommendations from the June 11, 2018 Board meeting, which were included in the staff report. He summarized the issues identified in the staff report, including whether the project:

(1) Encourages diverse activities and creates a “sense of place” that is unique, enjoyable, and inviting to the public at the Estuary Green

(2) Creates diverse recreational opportunities for people of all races, cultures, ages, abilities, and income levels

(3) Includes Bay Trail design and alignment that activates and improves connections to the adjacent public access areas, some of which are currently underused

(4) Includes improvements that are inviting to the public at Water and Alice Streets that help create a consistent streetscape to the overall Jack London Square area

(5) Provides enough usable open space at the Estuary Green to allow for a festival zone to function for special events while maintaining a 20-foot-wide unobstructed corridor for the public to walk through

(6) Enhances the pleasure of the user or viewer of the Bay

(7) Encourages movement to and along the shoreline and connects to the nearest public thoroughfare where convenient parking or public transportation may be available

(8) Includes an appropriate maintenance design to be resilient and adaptive to sea level rise

Mr. Deppe showed a hyperlapse video and pointed out features of the proposed project site. He stated the staff interpretation of “Estuary Green” is a multi-use space with passive or active uses. He reminded the Board that this project is pre-permitted so the resiliency to sea level rise is mostly being determined in terms of a maintenance context.

b. **Project Presentation.** Sean Buran, Vice President of Development, CIM Group, stated project proponents have incorporated the Board’s comments and recommendations from the June meeting and were excited to present their revised plan. He stated the hotel is an integral piece to the Jack London Square project.

Sarah Kuehl, Einwillerkuehl, Inc., Landscape Architect, provided an overview, with a slide presentation, of the changes made to the design since incorporating the Board’s comments and recommendations from the June meeting, such as providing invitations to stay as well as pass through the ground floor of the hotel, allowing more landscaping to come through and around and wrap the building, and dramatically increasing the number and types of seating and microclimates to attract a broad diversity of visitors. She stated lighting, signage, and recreational areas have been added.

Ms. Kuehl stated the revised design is a simple, straightforward attitude about the kind of space that maximizes flexibility and puts a much more public ground floor onto the hotel. Those things make the revised design more consistent with what is happening elsewhere at Jack London Square and make an important stitch between this and the rest of the Bay Trail to the south in terms of being public and inviting for individuals to continue to use this part of Oakland.

c. **Board Questions.** Following the presentation, the Board asked a series of questions:

Ms. Alschuler asked Ms. Kuehl to confirm where the semi-public areas were on the ground floor of the hotel. Ms. Kuehl stated most of the lobby and conference rooms have been moved to the second floor of the hotel. The ground floor is now more available to anyone. She stated there are three types of open space that the public can enjoy on the new ground floor design, from public to semi-private.

Ms. Kuehl referred to a presentation slide with orange lines and stated anything outside the orange lines is 100 percent public at all times.

Ms. Kuehl stated areas with the slightly different grade of orange are areas where individuals could walk up and engage, come into the hotel lobby, or order a juice at the juice bar. She stated the hope was the individuals would be moving in and out of these areas.

Ms. Kuehl pointed out areas that are semi-private on the presentation slide where individuals could come into the restaurant or spa and be given access to using the gardens or pool. She cautioned that these areas may be determined only for hotel-specific uses.

Ms. Alschuler stated the revised design includes a significant topographic change from the water to the hotel. She stated the garden and palm grove was higher behind the seating wall. Today's presentation indicated that a little soil would be added, but it does not look like that would bring it up to the level on the slides. The area is currently flat. She asked for greater detail about the grade change.

Ms. Kuehl stated the previous design intentionally created more of a grade change and used a wall to clarify it. Water Street and the edge of the Estuary Green did not change, but the space between the two was graded differently in the revised design. She stated project proponents will continue to study the grade but, in terms of the overall concept, the idea is that it will be fairly flat. She stated there will be a grade change - it is currently at approximately elevation 13 at Water Street and will grade down to approximately 11.6 at Alice Street, but it is over such a long area that it is visually flat.

Ms. Alschuler asked if the pool and garden will be raised up. Ms. Kuehl pointed out a terrace with a step on a presentation slide and stated that is pushing that area closer to the other grade.

Ms. Alschuler asked about the height of the hedge. Ms. Kuehl stated it is eight feet tall at least. There was a conscious decision with the redesign to make the good views from the second floor of the hotel because a large amount of the lobby space and a bar are now located on the second floor. The first floor is intentionally designed to be in a garden space. She stated, while there may be views of the water from the first floor, that is not the goal.

Ms. Alschuler stated most of the public area is flat but is a little higher than it is currently. Ms. Kuehl agreed.

Ms. McCann asked if a security fence will be planned around the hedge area. Ms. Kuehl stated there will be a fence inside the hedge.

Ms. Alschuler asked if the security fencing will be on the inside or outside of the hedge. Ms. Kuehl stated the hope that it will be sandwiched in the middle. There is a gate that allows movement through the fence. She pointed out another gate on a presentation slide and stated there will be a fence that comes around and encloses the pool.

Mr. Strang referred to the rendering on Slide L10 where the hedge looks like it is three and a half feet tall. He asked if that is the hedge being discussed. Ms. Kuehl stated the hedge is depicted shorter than it should be.

Mr. Buran stated the hotel ground floor along Harrison and Water Streets has been raised by two feet, so the hedge appears shorter. He stated not only has the areas along Harrison and Water Streets been pulled up, the first-floor programming has been pulled in to create an arcade to invite the public in to interact with the hotel.

Mr. Strang asked about the trees in the courtyard and throughout the lawn. Ms. Kuehl stated the trees in the courtyard will ideally be olives. The trees in the lawn are a grove, likely evergreens at the water's edge and shade trees, such as oaks, inland.

Ms. Alschuler asked if cover and wind protection have been added since the last time the plan was presented. Ms. Kuehl stated shade has been added but nothing that is officially wind protection. She stated the opinion that the wind is part of the water experience.

Mr. Strang asked about the decision to change the palm trees to oaks. Ms. Kuehl stated the hotel design changed radically from a Palm Springs style to a more Northern California style, and the trees will change to reflect that. She stated, additionally, palm trees can be controversial. A few palm trees may be worked back into the plan, but the dominant planting palette will be different.

Ms. Alschuler asked for more detail about the landscaping along Water Street, including how far it extends. Ms. Kuehl stated the developer is responsible for both sides of the street. There is a design permitted and under construction for the project on the north side. The thought behind showing landscaping in the plan was that the residential side of the street would move to planters and pots.

Ms. Kuehl stated, regarding the covered space underneath the building, twenty-six feet must be kept clear for fire trucks. The idea is to make a cozy space with the planters and benches. If the hotel and restaurant succeed, this will be an active place.

Ms. Alschuler asked if the Marina Green design would be changed. Ms. Kuehl stated the proposed changes involve only one end to resolve the grounds in a connected way between the two projects.

Ms. Alschuler asked what is included in future maintenance. Ms. Kuehl stated everything, including Water Street and Marina Green, is part of that plan.

Ms. Alschuler stated the policies and permits include a discussion about bringing diversity to the site. She asked how the event setup and connectivity will reach out to people in the vicinity. Ms. Kuehl stated the most effective action is filling in the gaps in the Bay Trail with amenities for water use. People also use the space to commute.

Ms. Kuehl stated the site is blocked by the railroad track, making it difficult to reach, so people are likely to enter Jack London Square from the south and come in from the sides; the primary goal is to connect the Bay Trail to Water Street. In the official maps, the Bay Trail reaches the water's edge but is not inviting. The amenities will make the area feel more generous and public.

Ms. Kuehl stated Oakland does not have funding to maintain typical public parks. However, the public space at Jack London Square is very clean. As people see the new amenities and as the retail area becomes more successful, they will begin to use the area more as a public park. She noted that the site is well-used by a diverse group of people already.

- d. **Public Hearing.** No members of the public addressed the Board.
- e. **Board Discussion.** The Board responded to questions from the staff report as follows:

(1) **Public Access.** Would the proposed design for the Estuary Green encourage diverse activities and create a “sense of place,” which is unique and enjoyable, and inviting to the public?

Ms. McCann thanked the project proponents for taking the feedback to heart and refining their approach. She stated she recently spent time in Jack London Square; it is lively, diverse, and active. She stated her response for Staff Questions 1 and 2 is that the diagram that shows the permits is important because what has evolved in the design now responds to the sense of place of the entire Jack London area. The project site is a portal to the area, in a way, and an important connector to the south. There is a good balance between meaningful sense of place and reflecting the character through simplification. The revised design contains an appropriate level of complexity for the environment within which it sits.

(2) Do the proposed public access improvements create diverse recreational opportunities for people of all races, cultures, ages, abilities, and income levels?

Mr. Strang stated the fact that the area is simple and quiet makes it available to a diverse group of people to interpret as they wish. The ground floor of the hotel has developed nicely. He stated he liked the view along Water Street and the ability to look out towards the water with the lower hedge. He suggested balancing the ability to peek into the hotel by using higher and lower elements so it does not seem like a wall. Because the area is quiet, a strong planting concept becomes even more important.

Ms. Barton agreed with Mr. Strang’s comments. She stated the relationship between the building and the grounds flows beautifully and helps the whole site.

(3) Does the proposed Bay Trail design and alignment activate and improve connections to the adjacent public access areas, some of which are currently underused?

Ms. Alschuler stated it is important to point out where the Bay Trail is officially. Ms. Kuehl stated the existing property line has widened to accommodate the new Bay Trail section.

(4) Do the improvements proposed for Water Street and Alice Street help create a consistent streetscape to the overall Jack London Square area that is inviting to the public?

Mr. Strang asked about the end of Alice Street, which is an important but dismal-feeling spot, and how to improve it to feel more like a park than a street. He suggested nicer paving for the circle at the end to make a nicer termination for the waterfront walk. Ms. Kuehl agreed that the landscape space is rigid and uncomfortable. She stated no one comes to this end of Water Street because it is a dead end from a dead end. She stated it should be better planted to become an extension of the park with quieter lounging areas.

Ms. Alschuler stated the ground floor of the parking garage is now protected by landscaping. Ms. Kuehl noted that the parking is all valet parking now, which helps to hide the garage.

Ms. Barton stated the lifted hotel with the private zone above will be commercially successful.

Mr. Pellegrini stated the plane of the southern wall of the hotel bank that has the garage podium at the ground level, which will be the side end of hotel rooms with transparency in the corridor terminating that section, presents a great opportunity to think about public art. He suggested something that is vertical, such as a mural, that can also be an orienting piece as individuals move along the Bay Trail since it is a moment where the building comes closer to the Bay Trail than other places along the Bay. It would be interesting to consider how that vertical wall can be used as an opportunity for public art in this location.

Ms. Kuehl stated the project proponents have discussed public art and murals, but not in that location. She stated she will include it on the list of things to consider. She stated there has been a discussion about the character of the hotel rooms on the end that faces the water and how to make that an amenity inside the hotel. She stated that would help with the architectural expression on that side.

Mr. Pellegrini stated having transparency on the upper hotel floors would also be beneficial.

(5) Does the proposed design of the Estuary Green provide enough usable open space to allow for a festival zone to function for special events while maintaining a 20-foot-wide unobstructed corridor for the public to walk through? (The permit allows for 11,810 square feet for the festival zone.)

Ms. Barton stated the Estuary Green area is flexible and usable for festival setup and event functions.

Ms. Alschuler suggested an annual program for the site involving local communities. Ms. Kuehl stated she would forward the current programming for the site. It is up to Jack London Square to do the programming so that the community can grow. She stated they include an amazing range of programs.

Ms. McCann stated the benefit of the lawn is an opened range of opportunities.

Ms. Alschuler asked about the intention behind showing the structures against the curb and if access to event tents would be via the lawn area. Ms. Kuehl stated 20 feet must be kept open, but events could possibly open either way - to the Bay Trail or into the lawn. The area serves as a spine for organization.

Ms. McCann stated this type of setup could be managed even with the pressure from current traffic on the Bay Trail.

Ms. Alschuler asked if it is actually 20 feet. Ms. Kuehl stated the Bay Trail requires 18 feet, but there must be a 20-foot level area.

Mr. Strang stated the Estuary Green space is a ribbon or spine with the useable space on the side for events rather than a destination. Ms. Kuehl stated festivals will range over the entire space. The 20-foot clearance for the Bay Trail is required, festivals require 14,000 square feet, and the total Estuary Green must be 27,000 square feet, so about half would be festival zone. She stated it is not recommended that the festival zone include the outer edge because of the drops.

Ms. Gaffney clarified that the festival zones are permitted areas for special events with tents.

Mr. Strang asked if that is the 14,000-foot area. Ms. Gaffney stated it is 11,300 square feet. She stated it is not a requirement but it is the maximum square footage. She noted that the ribbon layout is generally consistent with how the other events are set up.

Ms. Alschuler stated some activities will be more comfortable at the proposed site because of the smaller spaces that line up rather than in Jack London Square. Ms. Kuehl agreed and gave the example of the Eat Real Festival, an event that currently crowds the Marina lawn to the point where it is uncomfortable. She stated she imagines the crowds for that event will spill down to the proposed site.

(6) Physical and Visual Connections. Is the proposed project designed to enhance the pleasure of the user or viewer of the Bay?

Comments and recommendations to this question are incorporated in the responses to other questions.

(7) Would the proposed public access improvements encourage movement to and along the shoreline, and connect to the nearest public thoroughfare where convenient parking or public transportation may be available?

Mr. Pellegrini stated Slide L11 helped to answer his questions from the June meeting. Ms. Kuehl stated the slide adds context and shows more of the idea than at the last presentation.

Ms. Alschuler agreed that the new renderings help answer the Board's questions about orientation and the progression from inland to the water's edge.

Ms. Barton stated one of the renderings of the end of L Street shows the edge condition with the chairs and lounge seats as if it is paved and more of a lookout that is hard-edged. Ms. Kuehl stated it is.

Ms. Barton asked if that is more the intention over the other rendering that is more screened back on the bottom left that seemed like it was landscaped coming up to the edge. Ms. Kuehl stated there is an existing public art piece that is the only thing that is not dismal at the end of the L Street. She stated people sit on it. She stated the thought is that the sun benches will pull up to that art piece and the area will function similarly to a beach, since it is close to the water in that area with the Bay Trail behind it. She stated the need to consider the balance of the plantings for the hammock grove area.

(8) **Sea Level Rise.** Are the public areas appropriately designed to be resilient and adaptive to sea level rise from a maintenance perspective?

Ms. Kuehl stated the project proponents used the Flood Explorer program as a framework.

Ms. Barton stated the need for neighboring sites to take sea level rise into account in their project designs. Ms. Kuehl noted that project proponents raised the hotel even higher after reviewing the Flood Explorer program.

Ms. Alschuler asked about the size of the sea level wall and if individuals will be able to see over it. Ms. Kuehl stated it is too high to see over.

f. **Applicant Response.** Ms. Kuehl responded positively to the Board's discussion and suggestions. She stated she especially appreciated the planting comments. She stated the project team will take the Board's comments into consideration and will come up with an improved design.

Mr. Buran stated the hope to begin construction on the hotel early next year.

Ms. Alschuler asked about the name of the hotel that will be constructed on the project site. Mr. Buran stated it is an important component to Jack London Square. The project proponents are in discussion about possible brands.

g. **Board Summary and Conclusions.** The Board did not summarize their conclusions. (Please refer to the Board Questions and Discussion.)

Board members collectively stated they do not feel they need to see this project again and asked staff to continue to work with the project proponents to incorporate their comments and suggestions.

5. **Adjournment.** Ms. Alschuler asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION: Ms. McCann moved to adjourn the November 5, 2018, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission Design Review Board meeting, seconded by Ms. Barton.

VOTE: The motion carried with a vote of 5-0-0 with Board Chair Alschuler, Board Vice Chair Strang, and Board Members Barton, McCann, and Pellegrini voting approval.

There being no further business, Ms. Alschuler adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

ANDREA GAFFNEY
Board Secretary

Approved, as corrected, at the
Design Review Board Meeting of
December 17, 2018.